Greek Maenadism Reconsidered

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GREEK MAENADISM RECONSIDERED

One of the most fascinating aspects of Euripides' Bacchae is the description of the maenads, the female worshippers of Dionysos. These women run over mountains, attack men, move like birds, are invulnerable to iron, fire and snakes, tear apart animals, children, and even the Theban king. Recently, this behavior has been the subject of two detailed studies which adopt widely divergent approaches. E.R.Dodds compared certain features of maenadism, such as the shaking of the head and the carrying of fire, with the behavior of known religious hysterics, and concluded that maenadism had developed from a kind of collective hysteria, which was channelled into organized rites in later times.[1] Following Jane Harrison,[2] Dodds saw in the omophagy, which he considered to be the culmination of the ritual, a kind of Christian communion: the worshippers devoured their own god. Dodds nowhere questioned the reality of Euripides' description; he took virtually all elements at face value.

Dodds' approach has been criticised by Albert Henrichs who directed the main arrows of his critique against two targets.[3] First, he argued that in the Bacchae elements of maenadic myth and ritual had been indiscriminately projected on to one and the same plane in such a way that maenadic myth and cult had become an intricate web, which was virtually impossible to disentangle.[4] His second point was: "It cannot be demonstrated that 'madness' understood as an abnormal psychological state was an authentic quality of the historical maenad, despite her name ... By all indications, the peculiar religious identity of the maenads had more to do with sweat and physical exhaustion than with an abnormal state of mind."[5]

It is the intention of my paper to advance our knowledge and understanding of precisely these two points (1) by focussing on criteria which allow us to distinguish the mythical elements in the Bacchae from those that were really

1) E.R.Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1951) 270–282. This is a partial reprint of Dodds, "Maenadism in the Bacchae," Harvard Theol.Rev. 33 (1940) 155–176.

2) J.E.Harrison, Themis, 1913[1] (Cambridge 1927[2]) 45–48. Harrison had been greatly influenced by the sacrificial theories of W.Robertson Smith, see A. Henrichs, "Loss of Self, Suffering, Violence: The Modern View of Dionysus from Nietzsche to Girard," HSCP 88 (1984) esp. section 4.

3) A.Henrichs, "Changing Dionysiac Identities," in B.F.Meyer and E.P. Sanders (eds.), Jewish and Christian Self-Definition III (London 1982) 137–160, 213–236, esp. 143–147, 218–224. The epigraphical evidence for maenadism has been analysed by Henrichs in his "Greek Maenadism from Olympias to Messalina," HSCP 82 (1978) 121–160. These studies have virtually renewed the study of maenadism.

4) The distinction between mythical and cultic maenads was made, in an article still worth consulting, by A.Rapp, "Die Manade im griechischen Cultus, in der Kunst und Poesie," RhM 27 (1872) 1–22, 562–611.

5) Henrichs, "Changing Dionysiac Identities," 146f.

part of historical maenadic ritual, and (2) by studying the maenadic ritual in a systematic way. In addition we will also consider the development of the maenadic ritual and its function in Greek female life.

I The problem of myth and ritual

We have at least two criteria at our disposal which can help us to determine whether a motif belongs to ritual or only to myth. First, we can compare a motif with similar reports from ancient Greece or other places. For example, according to Euripides the maenads carried snakes which even licked their cheeks (102–04, 698, 768). Dodds (The Greeks, 275) has interpreted the snake as Dionysos himself, but for this identification almost no evidence exists. Dodds also compared the Dionysiac snakehandling with the handling of rattlesnakes practised by sects in backward parts of America.[6] Even though in the latter instance the snakehandling is founded on Christ's words according to St. Mark (16.17f): "they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them," the resemblance is rather striking: in both cases the true worshipper is safe in the hands of his god.[7] Although maenads holding snakes are frequently depicted on vases,[8] we do not have a single literary report outside the Bacchae that they handled snakes in the maenadic ritual. This point is apparently confirmed by Plutarch,

6) See most recently B.Schwarz, "Ordeal by Serpents, Fire and Strychnine," Psychiatric Quarterly 34 (1960) 405–429; W.La Barre, They shall take up Serpents (New York 1962); N.Sherrard, "The Serpent-Handling Religions of West Virginia," Trans-Action 5 (1968) 22-28; S.M. Kane, "Holy Ghost People: The Snake-Handlers of Southern Appalachia," Appalachian Journal 1 (1974) 255–262; R.W.Pelton/K.W.Carden, Snake Handlers: God-Fearers? Or, Fanatics? (Nashville/New York 1974); K.W.Carden/R.W.Pelton, The Persecuted Prophets (Cranbury N.J./London 1976); for a review of films of this snake handling, see W.M.Clements, Amer.J.Folklore 90 (1977) 502–506. P. de Félice, Foules en délire, extases collectives (Paris 1947) 163f mentions a séance of the Aîssâoûa of Algeria in which the ecxstatic members slashed themselves, and devoured scorpions and vipers. In both cases the god is apparently supposed to protect the worshipper against the lethal power of the snakes.

7) Power over snakes was long to remain a topos even in the lives of Christian Saints, cf. A.A.Barb, "Der Heilige und die Schlangen," Mitt-Anthrop. Ges. Wien 82 (1953) 1–21; R.Wildhaber, "Beda Venerabilis and the Snakes," in Folklore Today: Festschrift R.M.Dorson (Bloomington 1976) 497–506. For snake handling in modern European cults, see D.S.Loukatos, Religion populaire à Céphalonie (Athens 1950) 151–59, and especially A.M. di Nola, Gli aspetti magico-religiosi di una cultura subalterna italiana (Turin 1976) 31–178 (on the cult of S.Domenico from Cocullo in the Abruzzi Mountains). For the Marsi and other professional snake handlers in antiquity, see Louis Robert, in Charisterion A.K.Orlandos I (Athens 1965) 343–347; G.Piccaluga, "I Marsi e gli Hirpi," in P.Xella (ed.), Magia (Rome 1976) 207–231, esp. 207–10; B. de Gaiffier, Receuil d'hagiographie (Brussel 1977) IX, 167–172.

8) See the iconographical studies of maenadism: L.Lawler, "The Maenads," Mem.Am.Rome 6 (1927); H.Philippart, "Iconographie des Bacchantes d'Euripide," Rev.Belg.Phil.Hist. 9 (1930) 5–72; E.Coche de la Ferté, "Les Ménades etc.," RA 38 (1951) 12–23; M.Edwards, "Representation of Maenads on Archaic Red-figure Vases," JHS 80 (1960) 78–87; S.McNally, "The Maenad in Early Greek Art," Arethusa 11 (1978) 101–135.

according to whom Olympias exaggerated the customary rites by introducing into the thiasos a number of large and tame snakes.') It has therefore been inferred that in picturing the women of Thebes as handling snakes Euripides has transferred an act which in his time existed only at the mythical level on to the ritual level. [10]

There are, however, two more texts which need to be taken into consideration. Aeschines handled innocent snakes in the cult of Sabazios. [11] The presence of books and an Athenian wedding formula in the Sabazian ritual clearly demonstrates that the original Phrygian ritual (whatever that may have been) had been considerably changed when transferred to Athens. [12] Moreover, the mention of ivy, the liknon, and the cry euhoi points to a considerably Dionysiac influence on the ritual. This could well mean that the snakes also derived from the Dionysiac (maenadic?) ritual. Snakes are also mentioned by the late Hellenistic poet Andromachos (apud Galen XIV.45 Kuhn), according to whom οἱ τῷ Διονύσῳ βακχεύοντες searched for snakes in the spring and rent them. The masculinity of the worshippers and the mention of spring exclude the possibility of a maenadic ritual, but the connection of Dionysos with snakes is clear.

The absence of any mention of snakehandling in the maenadic ritual after the Bacchae and the observation by Plutarch make it likely that Euripides indeed took his snakehandling maenads from the mythical (iconographical?) tradition, but the iconographical tradition and the passages from Aeschines and Andromachos strongly suggest that snakehandling was practised by maenads in more archaic times.

We come to our second example. When the maenads raided the Boeotian villages they "carried fire upon their locks, and it did not burn them". [13]

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9) Plut.Alex.2 although the wording of this passage is not especially clear; for Olympias' attachment to Dionysiac religion, see also Duris FGrH 76 F 52; Athen. 14.659f. D.J.A.Ross, "Olympias and the Serpent, the Interpretation of a Baalbek Mosaic and the Date of the Illustrated Pseudo-Callisthenes," J. Warburg-Courtauld Instit. 26 (1963, 1–21) 21 wrongly sees in these snakes a rationalisation of the supposed snake at Alexander's birth.

10) This is the conclusion of Rapp (above, note 4) 13; Dodds, The Greeks, 275.

11) Dem. Cor.260. For the identity of the snakes, see now L.Bodson, "Les grecs et leur serpents," Ant.Class. 50 (1981) 57–78.

12) For Sabazios, see more recently Ch.Picard, "Sabazios, dieu Thraco-Phrygien: expansion et aspects nouveaux de son culte," RA 48 (1951) 129–176; S.E.Johnson, "A Sabazius Inscription from Sardis," in J.Neusner (ed.), Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenought (Leiden 1968) 542–550; F.Fellmann, "Belege zum Sabazioskult im frühkaiserzeitlichen Legionslager von Vindonissa," in Festschrift F.K. Darner I (Leiden 1978) 284-294; E.N.Lane, "Towards a definition of the iconography of Sabazius," Numen 27 (1980) 9–33; R.Kraemer, "'Euoi, Saboi' in Demosthenes De Corona: in which honor were the women's rites?," Seminar Papers Soc.Bibl.Lit. 1981,229–236.

13) Eur. Bacc. 757f. Curiously, Dodds, Roux (ad loc.), E.C.Koppf in his recent Teubner edition (1982), and H.Oranje, De Bacchae van Euripides: het

Manipulation of fire was not unheard of in antiquity. Egyptian priests actually lighted a kind of wine on their head which because of their thick hair burnt up too quickly to become dangerous.[14] However, manipulation of alcoholic drinks seems unknown in Classical and Hellenistic Greece even though it was known from libations that alcohol could burn (Theophr.Ign. 67). Moreover, in post-Homeric times Greek women were strictly forbidden to drink wine, and the transportation of wine into the mountains would certainly have aroused male curiosity.[15] Finally, unlike the priests, maenads did not have to impress an audience in their secret rites.[16]

In their commentaries Dodds and Roux compared the maenadic firehandling with the reports of ritual fire walking, a rite which occurred (and still occurs) in many parts of the world, such as Spain, modern Greece (the famous case of the Anastenaria), Oceania, India and Ceylon, China and Japan.[17]

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stuk en de toeschouwers (Diss. Amsterdam 1979) 151-154 = idem, The Bacchae of Euripides. The Play and its Audience (Leiden 1983) Appendix 3 (who argues that the text is perhaps interpolated) have not noted the imitation by Nonnos D.43.356f.

14) Hipp.Hef. 4.31, cf. R.Ganschinietz, "Hippolytos' Capitel gegen die Magier" = Texte u. Unters. 39,2 (Leipzig 1913) 46f.; H.Diels, Abh.Ak. Berlin 1913, Phil.-hist.-Kl. no.3, 21ff.; E.O. v.Lippmann, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften und der Technik (Berlin 1923) 60ff.; Th.Hopfner, Griechisch-agyptischer Offenbarungszauber II (Leipzig 1924) 75. Liv. 39.13.12 mentions manipulation of fire during the Roman Bacchanalia, for which see most recently J.North, "Religious Toleration in Republican Rome," Proc.Camb. Phil.Soc. 1979, 85-103; J.-M.Pailler, "La spirale de l'interpretation: les Bacchanales," Annales ESC 37 (1982) 929-952 (with very useful Forschungsgeschichte); idem, "Les pots cassés des Bacchanales," Mél. de L'ec. Franc. de Rome 95 (1983) 7-54; 0. de Cazanove, "Lucus Stimulae. Les aiguillons des Bacchanales," ibidem, 55-113.

15) For women and wine, see F.Graf, "Milch, Honig und Wein," in Perennitas, Studi in onore di Angelo Brelich (Rome 1980) 209-221; Henrichs, "Changing D. Identities" (above, note 3) 140f.; J.-L.Durand/F.Frontisi-Ducroux," Idoles, figures, images: autour de Dionysos", RA 1982, 83-108; Bremmer, The Early Greek Concept of the Soul (Princeton 1983) 109f.

16) R.B.Onians, The Origins of European Thought (Cambridge 1954²) 166 n.9 suggested a connection between the Bacchants and the stories of flames about the heads of Servius Tullius and Salvidienus Rufus. However, these flames were a royal portent, a meaning certainly excluded for the maenadic ritual, cf. Th.Köves-Zulauf, Reden und Schweigen (Miinchen 1972) 249f.

17) Spain: L.Armstrong, "Fire-Walking at San Pedro Manrique, Spain," Folklore 81 (1970) 198-213. Modern Greece: W.Puchner, "Beitrage zum thrakischen Feuerlauf" (Anastenaria/Nestinari) etc., Zs.f. Balkanologie 17 (1981) 47-75 (with exhaustive bibliographiy); add now W.D.Furley, Studies in the Use of Fire in Ancient Greek Religion (New York 1981) 211-235. Oceania: A. Lang, "The Fire Walk Ceremony in Tahiti," Folklore 12 (1901) 446-455; E. de Martino, I1 mondo magico (Turin 1948) 29-35 (many references). India and Ceylon: E.S.Thomas, "The Fire Walk," Proc. Soc. Psych. Research 42 (1934) 292-309; L.Feinberg, "Fire Walking in Ceylon," The Atlantic 203 (1959) May, 73-76; K. Indra-Kumar, Fire Walking - The B'urning Facts (Ceylon 1972); K.W. Bolle, "Firewalking: A Note on Empirical Evidence," in Ex Orbe Religionum. Studia Geo Widengren oblata II (Leiden 1972) 3-10; H.-J.Klimkeit, "Die "Teufelstanze" von Südindien," Anthropos 71 (1976) 555-578. China and Japan: A.Lang, Magic and Religion (London 1901) 270-294.

Interesting are also the notice with photo in The Times, September 18, 1935 of a test carried out by the University of London Council for Psychical

Similar feats already took place in antiquity where fire walking is reported of the priests of Perasia in Asia Minor and of the Italic Hirpi Sorani.[18] However, in none of these rites has a single example been reported of people carrying fire on their head.[19]

In the messenger's speech the carrying of fire is combined with the report of the maenads' invulnerability to the villagers's arms. The combined mastery of fire and arms is typical of ecstatic cults, as appears from Tibullus' description of the followers of Bellona (1.6.45–48):

haec ubi Bellonae motu est agitata, nec acrem
flammam, non amens verbera torta timet:
ipsa bipenne suos caedit violenta lacertos
sanguineque effuso spargit inulta deam

We may also compare Iamblichus' report of some unspecified ecstatics:

"Many, through divine inspiration, are not burned when fire is introduced to them, the inspiring influence preventing the fire from touching them. Many, also, though burned, do not apprehend that they are so, because they do then not live an animal life. And some, indeed, though transfixed with spits, do not perceive it; but others that are struck on the shoulders with axes, and others that have their arms cut with knives, are by no means conscious of what is done to them."[20]

Outside Greece, in shamanistic séances, for example, we find the same combination. Among the Tungus, the shaman reportedly plays with burning coals and red-hot iron and stabs himself deeply without shedding any blood. And among the Kazak-Kirgiz, the shamanoid baqsa is reported to walk over red-hot iron barefooted, and to put a lighted wick into his mouth; he also slashes his face with a razor sharp knife, which leaves no visible marks.[21] We find the same combination among the Islamic Īsawiyya, whose founder, Muhammed ibn ʿĪsa (AD 1465-1524)," adopted ecstatic practices, whereby the dervishes became

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Research with a young Indian, and J.M.Freeman, "Trial by Fire," Natural History 83 (1974) 55–63 on a walk during which many people were wounded. Note that in the ordeals by fire, fire is never put on the head: E.Benz,"Ordeal by Fire," in J.M.Kitagawa and Ch.Long (eds.), Myth and Symbols. Studies in Honor of Mircea Eliade (Chicago 1969) 241–264.

18) Perasia: Strabo 12.2.7; Iamb.Myst.3.4; L. Robert, in A.Dupont-Sommer and L.Robert, La déesse de Hiérapolis Castabala (Paris 1964) 53–64. Hirpi Sorani: A.Alföldi, Die Struktur des voretruskischen Romerstaates (Heidelberg 1974) 77f, 98f (hardly convincing); G.Piccaluga (above, note 7) 211–231. Note also Vita Pachomii[1] c.8.

19) Oranje, De Bacchae, 252 n.118 (= The Bacchae, n.402) also stresses the difference between fire walking and carrying fire on the head.

20) Iamb. Myst. 3.4, tr. T.Taylor, Iamblichus on the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans and Assyrians (London 1895²) 122.

21) Tungus: S.M.Shirokogoroff, Psychomental Complex of the Tungus (London 1935) 365. Kazak-Kirgiz: J.Castagné, "Magie et exorcisme chez les Kazak-Kirghizes et autres peuples turcs orientaux," Rev.Et Islamiques 1930,53-151, esp. 87,90.

immune to sword and fire."[22]

The occurrence of the idea of immunity to the lethal powers of culture and nature in maenadic ideology is highly probable. Maenadic rites were performed in the rough mountains of Greece in the heart of winter. Yet the women will not have felt any pain or discomfort because of their state of ecstasy (below). This must also have been the conclusion of Nonnos (D. 14.384f) who noted that the rocks did not scratch the naked foot of the Bacchant. We cannot absolutely exclude the possibility of the existence of fire manipulation among the τέχναι of the Dionysiac orgia - [Aristotle] (Mir. 122) mentions a fire miracle for Dionysos - but outside the Bacchae fire handling in maenadic ritual is nowhere reported; neither need we believe in collective invulnerability. The inference therefore seems most plausible that Euripides does not give us a factual description of handling fire, but he presents as a reality the idea of the maenads' insensibility, even invulnerability, to the lethal powers of fire and iron. Moreover, he does so in a hyperbolic way: even though the maenads' hair caught fire, it did not burn.[23]

Euripides exaggerated the maenads' insensibility to pain by representing it as invulnerability. We touch here on a characteristic element of mythical discourse, as the following examples show. In the pharmakós ritual the scapegoats were only expelled, but according to the myths,[24] they were killed. In ritual the Locrian maidens had to spend only one year in Troy, but myth spoke of a life long stay.[25] We know that in initiatory rites boys were dressed as girls, but initiatory myths, such as that of Leukippos, could speak of an actual transformation into a girl.[26] During the annual Lemnian ritual of the new fire, wives had to abstain from sexual intercourse with their husbands, but myth spoke of the wives murdering their husbands.[27] In the ritual the

22) J.Spencer Trimingham, The Sufi Orders in Islam (Oxford 1971) 86.

23) Another example where comparison with non-Greek reports is useful occurs in the messenger's speech (v. 748) where we are told that the maenads moved 'like birds lifted by their flight'. Roux (ad loc.) interprets these words as a description of levitation, yet another Dionysiac miracle. However, in all the reports of levitation we find no example of crowds of flying women. Levitation is always the activity of the individual, who never travels more than one yard; levitation is therefore impossible in this case, cf. O.Leroy, Levitation (London) 1928); A.M.Turi, La levitazione (Rome 1977). For classical reports of levitation, see E.R.Dodds, The Ancient Concept of Progress (Oxford 1973) 203-205; add the case of St. Augustine's mother Monica: Acta Sanctorum Maii Tom.I, p.486.

24) For this detail and similar examples in scapegoat rituals, see Bremmer, "Scapegoat Rituals in Ancient Greece," HSCP 87 (1983) 299-320.

25) Cf. F.Graf, "Die lokrischen Madchen," Studi Storico-Religiosi 2 (1978) 61-79.

26) Cf. W.Burkert, Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual (Berkeley etc. 1979) 29; D. Z.Nikitas, "Zur Leukipposgeschichte," Hellenika 33 (1981) 14-29.

27) Cf. W.Burkert, "Jason, Hypsipyle, and New Fire at Lemnos," CQ 20 (1970) 1-16

Arrephoroi passed through a subterranean tunnel, but myth spoke of suicide.[28]

This particular difference between myth and ritual has received almost no attention.[29] As a preliminary contribution - further investigation is necessary - we may note the following aspects of the phenomenon. First, myth can represent symbolic acts as reality: whereas ritual has to dress boys as girls, myth can actually change them into girls (Leukippos). Thus myth can realize the intention of ritual at a higher level than ritual itself. Second, myth can contain the comments of society on ritual: by representing the maenads' leaving of the home as a tearing apart of their children, myth expresses male horror at this act (below). Third, myth represents the ideal reality and can never fail, whereas ritual is fallible: for instance, in the scapegoat myth people always offer themselves voluntarily, in reality slaves often had to be bought or other people lured by rewards.[30] Finally, a general observation. Whereas ritual can often manipulate people over a certain length of time, myth has to be effective the moment it is communicated. It therefore often needs exaggeration to drive home the point it wants to make. But whatever aspect of the difference may be relevant in a particular case, one thing is certain. This difference cannot be interpreted as a development in time: we may safely assume that boys never changed into girls, and that wives never annually killed their husbands. This insight into the essential difference between myth and ritual can help us to reach a better understanding of some other important details of maenadic behavior in the Bacchae.

Modern scholars often describe maenadic behavior as a kind of infectious disease, a mass hysteria, and ever since Nietzsche a comparison has been made with the dancing epidemics of the Middle Ages.[31] However, we know that in historical times maenadic rites were not celebrated spontaneously by all the women of a city but only by restricted groups at a fixed period every other year (below § 3); in Miletus the thiasoi were even closely regulated by the city.[32] In Amphissa the women had to ask their husbands' permission to

28) Cf. W.Burkert, "Kekropidensage und Arrephoria," Hermes 94 (1966) 1–25 and Homo necans (Berlin/New York 1972) 169–173= idem, Homo necans. The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth (Berkeley etc. 1983) 150–154; G.S.Dontas, "The True Aglaurion," Hesperia 52 (1983) 48–63; A.Henrichs, "Die Kekropidensage im P.Herc. 243: Von Kallimachos zu Ovid," Cronache Ercol. 13 (1983) 33–43; N.Robertson, HSCP 87 (1983) 241–288.

29) M.Delcourt, Oedipe ou la légende du conquérant, 1944[1] (Paris 1981) 44 considered the difference typical of aetiological legends which had to exaggerate their point to make it clearer. However, the phenomenon certainly transcends the genre of aetiological legend and is more complicated, as I argue. Note, however, Burkert, Homo necans, 44 (= Amer. ed. 34).

30) Bremmer, "Scapegoat Rituals," 307f. We may compare the perceptive comments on the difference between a bear festival and a real bear hunt by J.Z.Smith, Imagining Religion (Chicago 1982) 53–65, 143–145.

31) For references, see Henrichs, "Changing D, Identities" (above, note 3) 145f with notes; add Smith, Imagining Religion, 113.

32) Sokolowski, LSAM, 48.

accompany the maenads who had collapsed in the agora to the edge of the city: certainly no mass hysteria was present there.[33] Taking into account the fundamental difference between myth and ritual, we can now see that many descriptions by modern scholars are strongly misleading, based as they are on an extrapolation from the mythical accounts only. Moreover, the medieval dancing epidemics, which only took place in situations of stress such as famine and plague, always involved both sexes, and were closely linked with existing rituals and institutions.[34]

When we differentiate between myth and ritual, we can also make progress with another much discussed problem. In the parodos of the Bacchae the themes of 'sparaqmos' and omophagy are sounded at an early stage: the chorus mentions the "blood that flows when a goat is killed, the joyful act of eating raw meat" (138). The theme is later elaborated upon when the women tear cattle apart (734-47), and when cannibalism is hinted at.[35] The idea is older than the play; vases from the sixth century show Pentheus' 'sparagmos', and on a vase of the second quarter of the fifth century a maenad is represented with a dagger and a goat leg.[36] Virtually all scholars have taken these savage activities at face value, if not for the Classical Age, then at least for earlier times.[37] Here, too, a comparison with the historically documented ritual is illuminating.

In a Milesian inscription we read: "Whenever the priestess performs the rites of sacrifice on behalf of the city, nobody must 'omophagion embalein'

33) Plut. M.249ef. The presence of Phocians in Amphissa dates the incident to about 353 B.C. (during the Third Sacred War), as P.Stadter, Plutarch's Historical Methods (Harvard 1965) 79f persuasively argues. Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema painted 'The Women of Amphissa' in 1887; the painting is now in the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts. See R.Borger, Drei Klassizisten, Alma Tadema, Ebers, Vosmaer (Leiden 1978) 14 no. 278 for a recent bibliography.

34) Cf. J.F.C.Hecker, Die grossen Volkskrankheiten des Mittelalters (Berlin 1865) 143-192 (1832[1]); H.Liebscher, Ein kartographischer Beitrag zur Geschichte der Tanzwut (Diss. Leipzig 1931); E.L.Backman, Religious Dances in the Christian Church and in Popular Medicine (London 1952); G.Rosen, Madness in Society (New York 1968) 195-225; M.Broekman, "La dansomanie de 1374: hérésie ou maladie?," Revue du Nord 63 (1981) 339-355.

35) Eur. Bacc. 1184 and 1241-47, cf. C.Segal, Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae (Princeton 1982) 188 n.46. Oranje loc. cit. (above, note 13) also compares v. 754; according to him, Nonnos D. 45.294ff shows that Nonnos did not understand the kidnapping of the children whereas the Athenian audience will have inferred that the children will be torn apart.

36) See, besides the literature cited in note 8, F.T. v. Straten, "Archeologische bijdrage tot de bestudering van Euripides' Bacchae," Lampas 9 (1976) 51-77; K.Schauenburg, "Das Motiv der Chimairaphonos in der Kunst Unteritaliens," in Studies in Honour of Arthur Dale Trendall (Sydney 1979) 149-154; J.-J.Maffre, "Quelques scenes mythologiques sur des fragments de coups attiques de la fin du style sévère," RA 1982,195-222, esp. 203-207 ("Dionysos MAINOMENOS").

37) For the evidence, see the enumeration by Henrichs, Changing D. Identities, 218 (above, note 3); add H.S.Versnel, "Pentheus en Dionysos. Religieuze achtergronden en perspectieven," Lampas 9 (1976, 8-41) 23.

before the priestess has done so on behalf of the city." Although the exact meaning of the Greek phrase is obscure, it is clear that in Miletus omophagy consisted of a sacrifice and that, as Henrichs observes, "the Milesian maenads will have left the scene of their sacrifice, at the worst, with bloodstained hands and clothes but hardly with raw meat in their teeth and blood dripping from their mouths."[38] The inference seems inevitable that once again myth exaggerated ritual: the maenads who ate raw meat operated only on the level of myth - reality was much less breathtaking or disturbing.

II The maenadic ritual

Having discussed various ways of disentangling myth from ritual, we will now proceed to a systematic analysis of the maenadic ritual by tracing its successive steps. Until now scholars have concentrated on the individual elements of the ritual without presenting an integrated picture in which all the known elements are seen as indispensable parts of a multi-media performance. We will pay particular attention to the effects the ritual must have had on the maenads, and we will not hesitate to invoke the help of neurophysiological research for a better understanding of the various ritual elements. Of course I am well aware of the preliminary character of many modern findings, but an application of neurophysiological data such as this paper attempts will at least show that new insights in the study of Greek ritual may be expected from this direction.[39]

The fact that a group of women left the city must have caused a great stir in the Greek polis, and it is hardly imaginable that this event was not dramatized in such a way as to make this peculiar behavior legitimate. I take it therefore that the maenadic ritual started with some public manifestation before the women marched into the mountains. On the occasion of this event the sacrificial act of 'omophagion embalein', which we already mentioned, will have taken place. In Miletus this act was performed 'on behalf of the city' ('hyper poleos') and was clearly localized near or in the city, and certainly not in the mountains.

Why did the maenads handle this raw meat? In Greek ideology eating raw meat

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38) Sokolowski, LSAM, 48, cf. Henrichs, "Greek Maenadism," (above, note 3) 151. H.S.Versnel, in Le Sacrifice dans l'antiquité (Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique 27, Geneva 1981) 38f., suggests, not convincingly, that the sacrifice had no direct ritual predecessor, but was derived directly from the mythical material.

39) For the physical and neurophysiological effects, see S.S.Walker, Ceremonial Spirit Possession in Africa and Afro-America (Leiden 1972) 10-25 ("The Neurophysiology of Possession"); B.Lex, "The Neurobiology of Ritual Trance," in E.G. d'Aquila e.a. (eds.), The Spectrum of Ritual (New York 1979) 117-151. Note also the plea for the use of neurophysiological data in the study of ritual by J.Verrips, "Wie zijn hoofd niet koel houdt gebruikt zijn hersens" = EUROMED Working Paper No.35 (Amsterdam 1983). For this section of my paper I have also greatly profited from suggestions by the neurophysiologists Dr. C.Deinema (Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht) and Prof. Dr. F.H.Lopes da Silva (University of Amsterdam).

was typical of marginal sects, and it was frequently ascribed to neighboring peoples, that is to say to those who were in opposition to the ordered world of the polis.[40] Maenadic behavior thus fits in well with other important female rites like the Thesmophoria, Skira, and Adonia, which all enacted elements of disruption or inversion, such as sexual abstinence or promiscuity, sterility, and women leaving home.[41] In the maenadic myths the tearing apart of the children dramatized the separation from home; the eating or touching of raw meat had the same function in the maenadic ritual.

After their dramatic start the maenads, perhaps in three thiasoi,[42] marched into the mountains. During the march the maenads will have shouted the cry 'eis oros', or 'to the mountain,' a cry which is repeatedly mentioned in the Bacchae (116, 165, 986).[43] In the Bacchae (704ff, 1051f) the mountain appears as a lush place where it is very pleasant to be, and Calame has compared the Bacchic 'paysage' with the flowery nature of Artemisian landscape.[44] However,

40) Cf. C.Segal, "The Raw and the Cooked in Greek Literature," Class.J. 69 (1973/74) 289-308; Henrichs, in Le Sacrifice, Entretiens Hardt 27 (Geneva 1981) 220.

41) For female rites as an inversion of the polis' values, see J.Gould, JHS 100 (1980) 51. Thesmophoria: K.Dahl, Thesmophoria: en graesk kvindefest (Copenhagen 1976) with most of the texts; Burkert, Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche (Stuttgart 1977) 365-370 (with previous bibliography); M.Detienne, "Violentes 'eugenies'," in M.Detienne/J.-P.Vernant (eds.), La cuisine de sacrifice (Paris 1979) 183-214; F.Zeitlin, "Cultic Models of the Female: Rites of Dionysos and Demeter," Arethusa 15 (1982) 129-157; R.C.T.Parker, Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion (Oxford 1983) 81-83; E.Simon, Festivals of Attica (Madison 1983) 18-22. Skira: Burkert, Homo necans, 161-168 (= Amer. ed. 143-149); Simon, Festivals of Attica, 22-24. Adonia: Detienne, Les jardins d'Adonis (Paris 1972) with previous bibliography; Burkert, Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual (Berkeley etc. 1979) 105-111; S.Ribichini, Adonis, Aspetti "orientali" di un mito greco (Rome 1981) with the substantial review by O.Loretz, Ugarit-Forschungen 13 (1981) 323-325.

42) Eur. Bacc. 680 (which will have influenced [Theoc.] 26.2); Propert.3. 17.24; Sokolowski, LSAM, 48 attests a three-fold organization in Magnesia which was derived from Thebes. The three Proitids (below, note 79) and the three Minyads (below, note 82) suggest that an organization in 3 thiasi also occurred outside Thebes.

43) As was already seen by W.Schmid, Geschichte der griechischen Literatur III.1 (Miinchen 1940) 670 n.1; note also the cry εἰς σκοπέλους in Nonnos D.46. 172. Henrichs, "Changing D. Identities," (above, note 3) 156 unnecessarily suggests that in Hellenistic inscriptions the cry might derive from the Bacchae.

44) C.Calame, Les choeurs de jeunes filles I (Rome 1977) 262f. The similarity as regards the landscape is also noted by Ph.Borgeaud, Recherches sur le dieu Pan (Rome 1979) 122. For Dionysos and the mountains, see Roux on Bacc. 32-33 to which has to be added Pratinas TGF 4 F 3 and Anth.Pal. 6. 134, a description of a Hellenistic (according to D.Page, Further Greek Epigrams, Cambridge 1981, 138; J.Labarbe, "Les trois bacchantes d'Anacréon," in Mêlanges Jacques Stiennon (1983) 403-416 maintains the authorship of Anacreon) painting of three Maenads returning ἐξ ὄρεος; Segal, Dionysiac Poetics (above, note 35) 111-118. Female Dionysiac ὀρειογυάδες now apparently appear in an inscription of Ephesos (I. Ephesos 106 = SEG XXVI. 1237). The Dionysiac interpretation of the Erythraean Μιμαντοβάτης (I. Erythrae und Klazomenae I. 64; cf. also ZPE 38 (1980) 150= SEG XXX.1327) is rightly rejected by Henrichs, "Changing D. Identities (above, note 3) 224 n.98.

there is a great difference between the worlds of Dionysos and Artemis, for the Dionysiac rites took place in winter, but the Artemisian ones in spring. The Bacchic landscape therefore represents a utopian vision, not a ritual reality. Yet this vision in due time could influence the choice of cult locations. In Magnesia, a plane tree had been the scene of a miraculous epiphany of Dionysos. It can hardly be fortuitous that in Greece plane trees usually grow in a shadowy, moist place: the epiphany took place in the god's 'own country'. [45]

It is only in the mountains that Euripides, perhaps in imitation of the ritual, lets the Theban women change themselves into maenads proper. The messenger (v. 695ff) relates that in the mountain the women left their hair down and pulled up their fawnskins; here they will also have removed their shoes. Loose hair and barefootedness are typical signs of liminality in Greece, in this case stressing the separation from the ordered world of the polis. [46] This liminal state also made the women similar to each other in appearance by removing the individualising ornaments of hairbands and shoes: for the god all worshippers were equal.

The rites were opened perhaps with the sacrifice of cakes, as described in the strange maenadic poem in the Theocritean corpus. [47] Diodorus Siculus has recorded that during the rites the women sang, calling for the presence of the god. [48] Unfortunately, our sources do not tell us whether any other ritual activities took place.

Charles Segal has perceptively connected the cry 'eis oros' with the ecstasy-producing or self-hypnotic techniques of the chanted repition of a single word or phrase from shamanistic séances (or, we may add, modern Zen). [49] This shouting will have helped the women to reach the proper Dionysiac mood, but the transformation from quiet housewife into raging maenad is a psychological transformation which needs more than mere shouting. How then was this brought about? As the English anthropologist Lewis notes, "trance states can be readily induced in most normal people by a wide range of stimuli, applied either separately or in combination. Time-honored techniques include the use of alcoholic spirits, hypnotic suggestion, rapid overbreathing, the inhalation of smoke vapors, music and dancing, and the ingestion of such drugs as

45) I. Magnesia 215 (a) 5-7, cf. Henrichs, "Greek Maenadism" (above, note 3) 132f. For plane trees, see Frazer on Paus. 4.34.4.

46) Maenadic loose hair: Roux on Eur. Bacc. 150; Henrichs, "Greek Maenadism" (above, note 3) 157 n.113; add Callistr. Stat.2; Nonnos D.14.345f., 15.76. Barefootedness: Roux on Bacc. 665; add Nonnos D.14.384f, 19.330, 46.147. In general: Graf (above, note 25) 67-69.

47) Theoc. 26.7 with Gow's commentary.

48) Diod. Sic. 4.3.3 καὶ καθόλου τὴν παρουσίαν ὑμνεῖν τοῦ Διονύσου. The singing was apparently antiphonic: Eur. Bacc. 1057; Ennius fr.52 Jocelyn. These passages were overlooked by Rohde, Psyche, 9 who noted: "Wir hören nichts von Gesangen."

49) Segal, Dionysiac Poetics (above, note 35) 112.

mescaline or lyserqic acid and other psychotropic alkaloids."[50] Such techniques have been called "driving behaviors." Which ones did the maenads employ?

In the Bacchic rites a prime 'driving behavior' will have been the music of the tympanon and the aulos (commonly translated 'flute' but in sound much more similar to the oboe or clarinet). These instruments also figured in the orgiastic rites of Cybele and the Corybantes, and Dodds has adduced examples of their combined occurrence in the late medieval dancing cult of St.Vitus and in dancing epidemics in Italy.[51] Why did the maenads use these instruments and what were their effects? We will start with the tambourine.

Percussion instruments are employed in rituals all over the world to induce trance-like states; the drum in particular is very popular.[52] Continuous subjection to the rhythms of the drum, or, as in our case, the tambourine, has a synchronizing effect on the activity of neuronal cells in some centres of the brain. The external rhythm becomes the synchronizer of the activity of the brain; as a result the sound and the action 'possess' and control the participant.[53] In addition the photic stimulation of torches will have intensified the influence of the music. We all too often forget that the dances took place at night, so that the torches produced visual flicker effects due to shifts in ocular focus and the movement of dancers between an individual and the light source.[54]

Continual and violent shaking of the head by the maenads also intensified the synchronizing effect. Dodds presented a number of parallels from other cultures for the tossing of the head in ecstasy,[55] but he completely overlooked that this tossing is attested in antiquity not only for orgiastic cults

50) I.Lewis, Ecstatic Religion (Harmandsworth 1971) 39.

51) Dodds, The Greeks, 273.

52) Cf. R.Needham, "Percussion and Transition," Man 2 (1967) 606-614; and the reactions by W.C.Sturtevant, "Categories, Percussion and Physiology," Man 3 (1968) 133f.; A.Jackson, "Sound and Ritual," Man 3 (1968) 293-299.

53) I have formulated the influence of rhythmical music in a more careful way than is normally the case in anthropological studies which usually quote the study by A.Neher, "A physiological explanation of unusual behavior in ceremonies involving drums," Human Biology 4 (1962) 151-160. In fact, Neher's study is rather debatable, see G.Rouget, la musique et la transe (Paris 1980) 249-252; V.Erlmann, "Musik und Trance, symbolische Aspekte des Bori Besessenheitskultus der Hausa in Maradi (Niger)," Africana Marburgensia 15 (1982) 3-24 and idem, "Trance and Music in the Hausa Bòorii Spirit Possession Cult in Niger," Ethnomusicology 26 (1982) 49-58. On the other hand, Rouget goes much too far in rejecting any connection between music and trance, see A. Zempléni, L'Homme 21 (1981) 105-110.

54) Nighttime dances: Eur.Ant. 1150; Roux on Bacc. 486; Nonnos D.16.386, 401, 27. 214. Torches: Henrichs, "Greek Maenadism," (above, note 3) 144 n.75; Nonnos D. 12.391.

55) For maenadic headshaking, see Dodds, The Greeks, 273f. Its importance was already noted by Rohde, Psyche, 11 n.3. In the Epilogue to his The Devils of Loudon (1952), Aldous Huxley also noted the phenomenon of 'head-wagging'. One wonders whether he had already read Dodds' The Greeks (1951), since in chapter 6 he compares the possessed nuns to a 'pack of Maenads'.

in general but also more specifically for the cults of Cybele (whose etymology was even explained by the tossing),[56] Bona Dea, Bellona, and the Dea Syria; even the ecstasy of the Pythia and other prophets was often connected with it.[57] Dodds explained the practice from religious hysteria but this is hardly convincing: the practice can also be observed in the case of autistic children.[58] The shaking activates the body's balancing organ, just as the whirling character of the dancing does,[59] and this helps the dancer to concentrate on the external stimuli, such as music and light. This synchronizing of the brain activity together with a focussing of the attention on specific stimuli must have been accompanied by a reduction of attention to the world around the maenads.

The importance of rhythm in connection with trance has only been 'discovered' in recent times; the Greeks connected madness in particular with the other instrument important in the Dionysiac rites, the aulos. The sound of the aulos must have had a relatively high number of high-pitched notes, since its two pipes, being rather long in comparison to their diameter, had to be blown with force.[60] The music of the aulos, especially when in the Phrygian mode, had the power to bring people to ecstasy, as the ancient texts repeatedly assure us.[61] Unfortunately, we cannot say why this would be so, since we are unable to reconstruct the Phrygian mode with any certainty. At this point further musicological research is necessary.

Amidst the pandemonium the maenads frequently shouted euhoi, the Dionysiac cry par excellence.[62] It is noteworthy that in the orgiastic cult of Tarantism

56) Servius Aen. 3.111 (also 10.220) ἀπὸ τοῦ κυβιστᾶν τὴν κεφαλήν; Et. Magn. 543.11.

57) In general: Alciphron 2.38; Quint. 11.3.71; Ulpianus apud Dig. XXI. 1.1.9. Cybele: Men. Theoph. fr. dub. 7 Sandbach; Call.fr. 193.35 Pf.; Anth. Pal. 6.51 (anon. XLII Gow-Page), 6.94 (Philip XIV GP), 6.173 (Rhianus VII GP), 6.218 (Alcaeus XXI GP), 6.219 (Dioscorides XVI GP), 6.281 (Leonidas XLIV GP); Varro Sat.Menipp. 132 Buch. (= 140 Cèbe); Ov. Fa. 4.244; Statius Theb. 10.173; Lucianus Dial.Deor. 12; Lampr. Heliogabalus 7.2. Bona Dea: Juv. 6.316. Bellona: Luc. 1.566. Dea Syria: Ap.Met. 8.27; Florus 2.7.4. Pythia: Sen. Oedip. 230. Mopsus: Val.Flacc. 1.208f. Sibyl: Luc. 5.172; Statius S. 4.3.121.

58) As Christine Bremmer pointed out to me.

59) Eur.Bacc. 569 εἰλισσομένας Μαινάδας; Nonnos D. 44.275. Rohde, Psyche, 9 n.4 overlooked these passages but nevertheless inferred the whirling character of the maenadic dances from other orgiastic dances by comparing Verg.Aen. 7.377ff; Alex-Aphrod. Pr. p.6 Us.; Heliod. Aethiop. 4.17; Et.Magn. 276.32. L.Gernet, Anthropologie de la grèce antique (Paris 1968) 81 also noted "le vertige de la chorée."

60) For the aulos, see Th.Reinach, "Tibia," in Daremberg-Saglio V, 300-332; G.Wille, Musica Romana (Amsterdam 1967) 53-56 ("Die Musik im romischen Bacchuskult"); Rouget, La musique, 297-315 (with some mistakes in interpreting the Greek); W.Boetticher, Aulos, Kleine Pauly I (München 1975) 755-760; J.-P.Vernant, "L'autre de l'homme: la face de Gorgô," in M.Olender (ed.), Pour Léon Poliakov (Brussels 1981, 141-156) 148f.

61) Cf. Aesch, fr. 71 Mette μέλος, μανίας ἐπαγωγὸν ὁμοκλάν; Soph. Aj. 610; Eur. Her. 871, 879, 895; Plato Symp. 215c.

62) Cf. Henrichs, "Changing D. Identities," 156; add Wankel on Dem. 18. 260; Thes. Ling. Lat. s.v. euhans and euhoe.

too the women shouted a cry of two syllables, a-hi.[63] From the reports it appears that this word was shouted in various intonations, sometimes close to barking; euhoi may well have been shouted in a similar way. Since chanting has a liberating effect but also causes hyperventilation, the shouting of euhoi was not only part of the generally excited atmosphere but also contributed to it.

The music and shouting accompanied and stimulated the dances of the maenads, which consisted mainly of running and jumping about. The character of the maenadic dances also becomes clear from the figurative use of Bacchic terminology which in Greek and Latin literature was widely used to denote ranting and raving.[64] The dancing took place in the mountains, and, what is usually overlooked, during the winter, so that the combination of physical exertion, thinner air and low temperature helped the women to achieve their state of trance much earlier than normal circumstances would have allowed.[65] The relative lack of oxygen will also have had an influence on the activity of the neuronal cells and the metabolism of the brain, which helped to cause a certain intoxication and to promote feelings of lust. These effects were reinforced by the deprivation of sleep which disturbs the circadian rhythm of the body and therefore induces the relaxed atmosphere of the nighttime ritual.[66] Low blood glucose and the production of adrenaline, resulting from overexertion, lead to a change of degree of awareness and increase susceptibility to visions: the mention of the smell of Syrian frankincense and the sight of milk and honey as described in the parodos of the Bacchae, may well be connected with real maenadic visions.[67]

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63) For the cry, see D.Carpitella, in the fundamental study of Tarantism by E. de Martino, La terra del rimorso (Milano 1961); I quote from the French edition: La terre du remords (Paris 1965) 365.

64) Jumping: N.J.Richardson on h.Dem. 386; Nonnos D. 20.8, 28.36. Dodds on Bacc. 111 perceptively compares the wearing of the fawnskin by the maenads with the leaping of the fawns; and the panther, whose skin the maenads wear on the oldest representations, was known for his leaps (Nonnos D.22.50, 36. 314, 41.191). Maenadic swiftness: Dodds on Bacc. 1090-3. Greek terminology: S.G.Cole, "New Evidence for the Mysteries of Dionysos," GRBS 21 (1980) 223-238, esp. 226ff. Latin: Thes.Ling.Lat. s.v. bacchari.

65) For the sometimes severe character of the winter, note especially Plut. M. 953cd.

66) Relaxed atmosphere: L.Ziehen, RE 17.2 (1949) 629-32; Borgeaud, Pan, 246-252. Both overlooked the important text, Artemidorus 3.61.

67) For the sweet smell, see Roux on Bacc. 144; add W.Deonna, "Ευωδία. Croyances antiques et modernes: l'odeur suave des dieux et des élus," Genava 17 (1939) 167-263; E.Benz, Die Vision (Stuttgart 1969) 371-77; Richardson on h.Dem. 275ff; B.Kötting, "Wohlgeruch der Heiligkeit," in Gedenkschrift A. Stuiber (Münster 1982)168-175; G.Bounoure, "L'odeur du héros. Un thème ancien de la lêgende d'Alexandre," Quad. di storia 1983, 3-46. Milk and honey: Graf, "Milch, Honig und Wein," add Euphorion Suppl. Hell. 430 ii 24 Lloyd-Jones/ Parsons.

It is hard to know precisely what the maenadic state of mind was during the ritual. The name 'maenad'(μαινάς) was essentially a poetic word which had decidedly pejorative connotations, and which evidently reflected male disapproval of the female worshippers of Dionysos.[68] Yet this disapproval does not necessarily invalidate the male view, and it must be noted that the close connection of 'madness' and Dionysiac rites also appears from the poetical application of the language of Bacchic frenzy to Lyssa.[69] Plutarch (M.291A) mentions that during their rites the women tore ivy to pieces. This activity and the ecstatic character of their dancing indicate that, even if 'madness' is not the right word, the maenads must certainly have been in a, what we call so inprecisely, altered state of consciousness.[70]

The dancing will have reached a climax when the dancers began to fall, as is mentioned in the Bacchae (136): "welcome in the mountains whosoever from the running bands falls to the ground, wearing the sacred cloak of fawnskin, hunting blood that flows when a goat is killed, the joyful act of eating raw, speeding to the mountains of Phrygia, of Lydia."[71] It is the falling which in this enumeration of Bacchic activities receives the greatest emphasis, since it is the only activity which is described in the verbum finitum; all others are described by the participle. In ecstatic cults a fall often signifies the climax of the ritual, the sign that the god has finally taken possession of the worshipper.[72] Given this emphasis on falling in the parodos, a fall may well have had this significance in the maenadic ritual; when the maenad resumes dancing, she is really entheos. The exhaustive dancing must have led to a decrease in the blood supply to the brain so that fainting will have occurred regularly; moreover, the flicker of the torches may well have elicited epileptic seizures in susceptible participants in the ritual.

In collections of Greek proverbs the expression 'like a Bacchant' is explained as applicable to people who remain silent.[73] It seems not impossible that this expression arose from the silence which must have occurred at the end of the ritual when the women would have been too exhausted to talk anymore.

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68) Henrichs, "Changing D. Identities" (above, note 3) 146.

69) Soph.fr. 941 Radt; Eur. Her. 899, Bacc. 977.

70) Henrichs, "Changing D. Identities" (above, note 3) 146f. seems too reluctant to ascribe to the maenads "an abnormal state of mind."

71) For the textual problems connected with this verse, see most recently W.J.Verdenius, Mnem. IV 34 (1981) 308–310; Henrichs, in H.D.Evjen (ed.), Hulley Memorial Volume, Scholars Press 1984.

72) Cf. J.Belo, Trance in Bali (New York 1960) 98; De Martino (above, n. 63) 69 and photo 9; A.Zempléni, "La dimension thérapeutique du culte des rab, ndop, tuuru et samp, rites de possession chez les Lebou et les Wolof," Psychopathologie Africaine 2 (1966) 295–439, esp. 310, 314, 400, 414; G.Cossard, Contribution à l'étude des candomblés au Bresil I (Paris 1970) 158f; S. Ferchiou, "Survivances mystiques et culte de possession dans le maraboutisme tunisien," L'Homme 12 (1972) 47–69; Rouget, La musique, 73f.

73) Suidas B 56, Σ 1021; Diog. 3.43; Apost. 4.71.

And so, all through the night, the maenads danced their wild and ecstatic dances, And at the end? The chorus sings in the parodos of the πόνον ἡδὺν κάματον τ' εὐκάματον, or 'sweet toil and labor that is well-labored' (v. 66f.).[74] This must refer to the feelings of the maenads after their exhausting dances. The pattern of sensory stimulation, along with the physical exertion causing changes in the blood circulation, resulted in a feeling of euphoria. It is possible that this state was accompanied by an increase in endorphins, the body's natural opiates, in the brain, as the most recent investigations seem to suggest.[75] It was in this euphoric mood that the maenads will have returned home where the harsh realities of Greek female life must quickly have brought them down to earth.

III The origin and function of maenadism

According the Henrichs, "the problem of maenadic origins, and of the reflection in maenadic myth and ritual, is unsolved, and conceivably incapable of any convincing solution by scholarly means of inquiry."[76] This statement seems unduly pessimistic, since a comparison of maenadic myths and rituals suggess at least one direction into which we have to look for a solution.

We are relatively well informed about the occurrence of maenadism. Besides the maenads proper of Thebes, Delphi, and Athens, there were some other sacred colleges of women which were clearly maenadic in origin, such as the Sixteen in Elis and the Oleiai from Orchomenos; and, as repeatedly has been seen, the myths of the Minyads and Proitos' daughters also belong in this context.[77] Within the Theban maenads Euripides distinguishes three categories of women: the young, the old, and the maidens; the latter participated also in the Delphic ritual. According to Diodorus Siculus (4.3.3) the maidens could only carry the thyrsos; apparently they later passed into the class of mature women. This points to a pre-matrimonial origin of the maenadic ritual, as does indeed some other evidence.[78]

74) For the physical exhaustion, note also Plut. M. 249ef; Ov. Am. 1.14. 21f; Prop. 1.3.5f.

75) J.L.Henry, "Possible Involvement of Endorphins in Altered States of Consciousness," Ethos 10 (1982) 394-408; R. Prince, "Shamans and Endorphins," ibid. 409-423.

76) Henrichs, "Changing D. Identities" (above, note 3) 218 n.53.

77) Except for Proitos' daughters, this was already seen by Rapp (n.4), 4ff. E.Gerhard, "Über die Anthesterien und das Verhaltnis des attischen Dionysos zum Koradienst," Berl.Akad. 1858, 166 (like various scholars after him) connected the college of the Athenian Gerarai too, but this seems less likely, see Bremmer, The Early Greek Concept of the Soul, 111. C.Brown, "Dionysus and the Women of Elis: PMG 871," GRBS 23 (1982, 305-314) 307 wrongly connects the Anthesteria with the Elean Thyia.

78) Three categories: Eur. Bacc. 694. Against Dodds, W.J.Verdenius, Mnem. IV 15 (1962) 350 rightly maintains that Euripides speaks of three different groups. For maidens in the ritual, see Eur. Bacc. 694, Ion 551, Phoen. 655f, 1751-57, Antigone fr. 213 Mette (Lustrum 23/4, 1881/82 = POx. 3317), Hypsipyle fr. 752 N^2 = p.23 Bond. Maidens are also frequently mentioned by Nonnos D. 9.

The pursuit of the daughters of Proitos ended in a marriage.[79] A wedding was also the resolution of Bacchic disorder in Chios. In his version of the Minyads' myth Aelian merely mentions that the Chian women were once stung by the 'oistros bacchikos', but Seleukos informs us that at the Chian Dionysia the women once became mad and started to fight with the men - a fight which ended in a group marriage.[80] Finally, The Elean Sixteen organised a race for adolescent girls. Since the race was typical in Greece of pre-matrimonial rituals, and this one was run during the Heraea in Elis, a pre-matrimonial function for the Sixteen seems very likely. This college also organised chorusses for Physkoa and Hippodameia. Unfortunately, the age of the participants in these choruses is nowhere mentioned, but Calame has argued persuasively for the pre-matrimonial character of Physkoa's chorus. According to him, the cult of Hippodameia was attached "à la figure de la femme mariée", but the myths about Hippodameia all revolve around her wedding so that a pre-matrimonial character seems not unlikely in this case, too.[81]

Our last instance envisages a slightly different situation. The daughters of Minyas refused to follow the other women of Orchomenos in the Bacchic rites, although they were already married and had children. This means, as Calame has seen, that the Minyads refused to accept that they had become married women, whereas the Proetids refused to become married women. The connection of this myth with the passage from adolescence is stressed in two different ways. First, the Minyads are characterised as adolescents by the 'hippic' names they carry (Arsippe and Lysippos); Antoninus Liberalis (10.3) actually calls the Minyads 'girls' (κόρας). Second, Plutarch (M. 299) mentions that the Minyads still lived in the house of their father - in other words, they had refused to settle in their husbands' homes as Greek women normally did after their wedding. Even though this myth cannot be called a pre-matrimonial one in the strict sense of the word, it is still concerned with the passage

261, 30.213, 33. 168, 36.257, 44.42. Verg.Aen. 7.389ff also points to the presence of maidens in the maenadic rites, and it is perhaps presupposed by the aetiological myth of Dionysos Pseudanor, cf. Polyaenus Strat. 4.1; Schol. Persius 1.99. For the pre-matrimonial character, note also Burkert, Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche (Stuttgart 1977) 436: "Alte Formen der Pubertatsweihe dürften gerade in den sexuellen Ritualen weiterwirken; nicht die Jungfrauen, nur Frauen konnten Bhkchai sein"; F.Graf, in his Nachwort to J.O.Plassmann, Orpheus, Altgriechische Mysterien (Köln 1982²) 165 speaks of "die Form des initiatorischen Kultbundes."

79) For the daughters of Proitos, see M.Massenzio, Cultura e crisi permanente: la "xenia" dionisiaca (Rome 1970) 91–98; Burkert, Homo necans, 189-194 (= Amer. ed. 168–73). A.Henrichs, "Die Proitiden im hesiodischen Katalog," ZPE 15 (1974) 297–301; Calame, Les choeurs I, 214-220; P.Scarpi, "Melampus e i "miracoli" di Dionysos," in Perennitas. Studi in onore di Angelo Brelich (Rome 1980) 431-444; H.Maehler, Die Lieder des Bakchylides I.2 (Leiden 1982) 196-202.

80) Ael. VH.3.42; Seleukos apuh Harpokration s.v. Ὁμηρίδαι. The group marriage is an archaic feature, cf. Gernet, Anthropologie, 39–45.

81) Elean Sixteen: Paus. 5.16.6f; Plut. M.251ef. Calame, Les choeurs I, 326 (Physkoa), 212 (Hippodameia and the married woman), 417ff (Hippodameia and Pelops).

from adolescence to the state of married woman.[82]

At first sight the presence of old women in the strenuous Bacchic rites is rather surprising. This was also the Greek male view, for in the case of older women acting in a manner unsuitable for their age it was proverbially said: "the old woman acts the Bacchant." Yet the mythical ancestors of the Elean Sixteen were said to have belonged to the most senior women, and it seems therefore reasonable to infer that the historical Sixteen too were advanced in age. The Theban maenads who were sent to Maqnesia will also have been advanced in age, since it seems unlikely that their kyrioi would have allowed women to go who were still capable of bearing children. In Elis the Sixteen were the initiatory supervisors: this will also have been the original role of the old women in Thebes, as it was for old women among many 'primitive' peoples.[83]

In the course of the Archaic Age the maenadic rituals seem to have lost their pre-matrimonial character, but they did not become obsolescent. Why not? There is of course no a priori reason why a dysfunctional institution should not survive for a long time in society. The functionalist approach all too easily overlooked the many examples of institutions which survived solely because they had a quasi-independent institutional life of their own.[84] Yet there are a number of reasons why maenadism should survive, even though not all the reasons that have been adduced are convincing.

Jeanmaire saw in maenadism a cure for illness like that offered by the African zar and bori cults but, as Gernet observed, maenadism is a collective trance, not an individual treatment.[85] Maenadism is also not an expression of women whose socio-sexual status was in a flux or who were in need of a more defined and stable social status. There is nothing in our evidence that points in this direction. On the contrary, wherever we have more detailed information about them, maenads appear to belong to the élite. The mythical

82) For the Minyads, see the analysis by Burkert, Homo necans, 194-197 (= Amer. ed. 173-76) with all sources; Massenzio, Cultura, 85-91; Calame, Les choeurs I, 242f, 417 n.131 (on the adolescent flavor of the names Leukippe and Arsippe); Scarpi (above, n.79); A.Schachter, Cults of Boiotia I (London 1981) 179-181.

83) For γραῦς βακχεύει, cf. Pherekrates fr. 35K, Zen. 2.96; Diog. 3.74, 4.10; Et.Magn. 266d; Photios A 1485 Theod.; Suidas A 1883. A.M. Komornicka, QUCC 9 (1981) 63 has overlooked the Bacchic coloring of the verb ἀναθῦαν in this context (like LSJ s.v. before him). Elis: Paus. 5.16.5. Magnesia: I. Magn. 215 with the extensive analysis by Henrichs, "Greek Maenadism" (above, note 3) 123ff. Initiatory supervisors: see e.g. A.Richards, Chisungu. A girl's initiation ceremony among the Bemba of Zambia (London/New York 1982²); D. Taylor, "Daughters of the Desert," The Guardian August 8, 1980.

84) For a trenchant critique of the functionalist approach, see L.Stone, The Past and the Present (Boston 1981) 9-11.

85) H. Jeanmaire, Dionysos (Paris 1951) 124ff; Gernet, Anthropologie, 80. Before Jeanmaire, R.Ganszyniec, "Dionysos i Mainady," Przeglad Historyczny 31 (1933/34) 279-294, 309 (French summary) had already explained the Maenads as neurotics.

ancestors of the Elean Sixteen were of the highest social circles, and so will have been their historical descendants. The leaders of the Theban maenads in Euripides Bacchae belonged to the royal family, as did in historical time the Oleiai in Orchomenos. Clea, the leader of the Delphic Thyiads, was apparently well-to-do, as we learn from Plutarch and the inscriptions. Alkmeionis, the Milesian Bacchant, had a name which, according to Merkelbach, "die Tragerin an den milesischen Uradel anknüpft." These references are few in number but they do not point in the direction of deprived women.[86]

Various scholars have argued that the tenor of maenadic mythology and ritual is one of female rebellion against male authority.[87] This is certainly true, but at the same time it should be observed that maenadism is only a half-hearted rebellion and only a pseudo-liberation: the maenads were upper-class women who undoubtedly had slaves to look after the children that were left behind, and their trip into the mountains would only last for a short, ritually prescribed period. Yet it is the nature of Greek women's life that provides the clue to maenadism.

The restricted nature of Greek women's life has recently been stressed once again.[88] There are at least three reasons, then, why women would have liked to continue practicing the maenadic ritual, even if it had lost its original meaning. First, it enabled women to leave home. The contrast between maenadic freedom and non-maenadic confinement appears clearly in the case of the women of Amphissa (above, n.33), who had to win their husbands' consent to accompany

86) Contra R.S.Kraemer, "Ecstasy and Possession: the Attraction of Women to the Cult of Dionysus," Harvard Theol.Rev. 72 (1979) 55-80. Elis: Paus. 5.16.5. Oleiai: Plut. M.299ef. Clea: Stadter, Plutarch's Historical Methods, 2f; E.Kapetanopoulos, BCH 90 (1966) 128-130. Alkmeionis: R.Merkelbach, "Milesische Bakchen," ZPE 9 (1972) 77-83.

87) See the enumeration of these views by Henrichs, "Changing D. Identities," (above, note 3) 145, 221. During the discussion of this paper in Oxford it was suggested that the stories about infanticide were the product of the female mind, which in this way subconsciously expressed its horror at always being tied down by the children. It seems dangerous to infer a subconscious horror, when we do not know anything about a conscious horror. Moreover, do we know of any Greek myths undeniably originating from women?

88) Cf. J.Gould, "Law, Custom and Myth: Aspects of the Social Position of Women in Classical Athens," JHS 100 (1980) 38-59, esp. 40, 46-49. It should be noted that the severity of women's seclusion had already been described with a wealth of evidence by W.A.Becker, Charikles III (Leipzig 1854²) 265ff. Of this seclusion I note two aspects which deserve further investigation. First, J.Minces, The House of Obedience: Women in Arab Society (London 1982) 41 observes that the seclusion creates a feeling of solidarity among women. This could also have been the case in Greece, cf. Antiphon 1.14f. Second, this seclusion may have played a role in the development of a specific 'Frauensprache', of which the existence in Greece has been argued by G.R.Solta, Die Stellung des Armenischen im Kreise der indogermanischen Sprachen (Wien 1960) 464; J.Knobloch, "Problemi e metodi della paleontologia linguistica" in Paleontologia linguistica (Brescia 1977) 19-38, esp. 33-36.

the stranded maenads to the boundaries of the city. The maenadic shuttle from Athens to Delphi must actuaily have enabled the Athenian women to stay away from home in a legitimate way longer than any other period in their lives. Second, the maenadic ritual, like other female cults, made it possible for women to mix freely in a female company, the membership of which transcended the immediate neighborhood.[89] Third, in Greek society a woman's identity was fixed in terms of her social role. Escape into a more authentic self-expression could only come through the temporary, if regularized, experience of possession trance.[90]

After the trance the women would return home and resume their dull and isolated existence, which the maenadic ritual, like other female cults, helped them to endure.[91] As such, the cult was an integrative factor in Greek social life of the Classical and Hellenistic period, just as visits to the disco, where we find the same phenomena of auditory and photic driving, headshaking, and strenuous activity,[92] help modern youths to get through the boredom of everyday life: maenadism as a Saturday Night Fever avant le lettre - a sobering thought.[93]

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89) For female contacts being confined to the immediate neighborhood, see W.K.Lacey, The Family in Classical Greece (London 1968) 173; add Men. Sam. 35-38.

90) Cf. E.M.Zuesse, Ritual Cosmos: The Sanctification of Life in African Religions (Athens, Ohio 1979) 187.

91) The element of 'escape' was also noted, in a revealing passage, by Wilamowitz, Griechische Tragodien IV (Berlin 1923) 130f: "Rasen und toben wird die Maenade, bis sie erschopft zusammenbricht. Wenn sie erwacht, wird sie totmatt sein, ernüchtert, aber sie hat sich ausgetobt, und durch die Entladung der in dem dumpfen Getriebe des Tageslebens niedergehaltenen Sehnsucht nach ungebundener Lebenslust erleichtert mag sie unter das Joch des Alltags zurückkehren. Der Gott hat sie erlost. Wir sehen an unsern Kindern, dass sie sich austollen und austoben müssen, und wehren ihnen nicht. Das Bedürfnis erstirbt auch in uns nicht, wenn wir es auch nicht mehr wie die Maenade befriedigen konnen. Sie hatte es besser als wir."

92) The resemblance of behavior in the disco to Dionysiac rites is noted by H.Cox, The Feast of Fools (Cambridge. Mass. 1969) 108-112; Henrichs, "Changing D. Identities" (above, note 3) 222 n.80.

93) This article is a revised version of a paper read at the meetings of the American Philological Association in Philadelphia in December, 1982, and at Oxford in March, 1983. For information and comments I would like to thank, besides the audiences at both occasions, W.Burkert, Fritz Graf, Nicholas Horsfall, Charles Segal, and especially Albert Henrichs. Susan Guettel Cole and Robert Parker corrected the English in a way which improved the manuscript in other respects.